

Unauthorized Plaster Casts at the Louvre’s Atelier de Moulage under the Direction of Eugène-Denis Arrondelle (1880–1907)

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Abstract

This article investigates the production of plaster casts at the Atelier de Moulage du Musée du Louvre under the direction of moulder and sculptor Eugène-Denis Arrondelle between 1880 and 1907. This *chef d’atelier* engaged in dubious practices, producing casts to which patinas were added without authorization, or selling casts made using the resources of the Louvre workshop as products of his private studio. Some of Ar-

rondelle’s unauthorized *surmoulages* could even be considered forgeries when he marketed them as direct casts of Louvre artworks. As a manufacturer of plaster casts, the Louvre thus was unwittingly exposed to competition with its own head of workshop. This case study allows us to explore the notion of authorship and authenticity in plaster casts and to highlight how commercial dynamics affected these concepts.

Introduction

[1] Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a mainly European network of private and public workshops dominated the international market for plaster casts. Among them, the state-owned Atelier de Moulage du Musée du Louvre, founded in 1794, was one of the most sought-after manufacturers. It enjoyed a privileged position thanks to both the museum's prestige and its public funding. Over time, the workshop continuously expanded its stock of moulds and plaster models from the Louvre's own collection and that of foreign museums: by 1928, its catalogue comprised 1,500 casts.

[2] Plaster casts enabled the serial (re)production of artworks at low prices. Their authorship was generally defined as being that of the manufacturing workshop. The usual practice was to insert a metal plaque that identified and certified the producer with its institutional designation and ensured the quality and origin of the cast. In the case of the Atelier de Moulage, the inclusion of a stamp and plaque became mandatory during the Second Empire (1852–1870).¹ At the turn of the century, it customarily contained the caption "Musée du Louvre" and a detail of laurel branches (Fig. 1). The contemporary press emphasized this distinctive feature of the Louvre workshop: "The authenticity of the provenance is guaranteed by a stamp of the Ministry of Fine Arts with the date of the edition."²



1 Atelier de Moulage du Musée du Louvre, *Victory of Samothrace*, plaster cast, first quarter of the twentieth century, detail of metal plaque identifying the producer. Museo de la Cárcova, Buenos Aires (photo: Milena Gallipoli)

[3] Nevertheless, these practices were far from ensuring a monopoly on official plaster casts, since the possibility of taking a mould from a cast and casting further copies (*surmoulage*) was

¹ Florence Rionnet, *L'Atelier de moulage du musée du Louvre (1794–1928)*, Paris 1996, 40. During this period, the Atelier's metal plaque bore the inscription "Maison de l'Empereur. Musées impériaux".

² "Notes d'art", in: *Le Bulletin de Vouziers* (August 26, 1894). "L'authenticité de la provenance est garantie par une estampille du ministère des Beaux-Arts avec la date de l'édition". This article mentioned Arrondelle as *chef d'atelier* of the Atelier de Moulage. All English quotations from French sources are translations by the author.

constantly practiced in an increasing number of private workshops.³ Moreover, this tension between authentic plaster casts and unauthorized objects unfolded within the Atelier de Moulage itself, through the action of none other than its own *chef d'atelier*, Eugène-Denis Arrondelle (Paris, 1824 – Chaville, 1907), who, during his tenure as director between 1880 and 1907, engaged in questionable practices in the premises of the Louvre.

[4] This paper focuses on the internal functioning of the Atelier de Moulage under the direction of Arrondelle in order to explore the notion of authorship and authenticity in plaster casts and how commercial dynamics affected these concepts. Under Arrondelle's direction, official plaster casts were not the only products being offered to clients. Certain casts were the result of unauthorized practices carried out by the *chef* – mainly the addition of patinas. Still others were sold directly under his own name instead of the Louvre's, with Arrondelle taking advantage of the Atelier's resources. Thus, the Atelier de Moulage faced some internal competition from its own head of workshop. Although clients were not necessarily deceived in every case, the higher authorities were aware of these practices to varying degrees and occasionally took action against them. In 1907, Arrondelle was finally dismissed from his position. Thus, a thorough distinction between the Atelier de Moulage's products and their historical derivations shall further contribute to the current debates that aim to valorize plaster casts as works in their own right, sometimes at the expense of the appreciation of copies as direct and objective representations of an original.⁴

[5] For a few decades after the First World War, cast collections did not attract much attention. In recent times, there has been a growing interest in research into plaster cast collections, which is reflected in specialized publications taking a variety of approaches, from compilations of historical cases to the materiality of plaster and the technical production of casts.⁵ In general, studies have focused on collecting, on the underlying motives and the means of

³ See Catherine Chevillot, "Nineteenth-Century *Sculpteurs* and *Mouleurs*: Developments in Theory and Practice", in: *Revival and Invention: Sculpture through Its Material Histories*, eds. Sébastien Clerbois and Martina Droth, Bern 2011, 201-230.

⁴ Malcolm Baker et al., "Les moulages en plâtre au xxi^e siècle", in: *Perspective. Actualité en histoire de l'art* no. 2 (2019): *Multiples*, 25-50: 26, <https://doi.org/10.4000/perspective.12692> (accessed January 23, 2025).

⁵ Some of the most comprehensive treatments of the subject are: Rune Frederiksen and Eckart Marchand, eds., *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting, and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present*, Berlin 2010; Annetta Alexandridis and Lorenz Winkler-Horaček, eds., *Destroy the Copy. Plaster Cast Collections in the 19th–20th Centuries: Demolition, Defacement, Disposal in Europe and Beyond*, Berlin 2022. On the history of nineteenth-century plaster cast collections in France in particular, see: Georges-Louis Barthe, ed., *Le Plâtre. L'art et la matière*, Paris 2001; Jean-Luc Martinez, "Exposer des moulages d'antiques. À propos de la gypsothèque du musée du Louvre à Versailles", in: *In situ. Revue des patrimoines* no. 28 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4000/insitu.12537> (accessed August 6, 2022); Soline Morinière, *Laboratoires artistiques: genèse des collections de tirages en plâtre dans les universités françaises (1876–1914)*, Ph.D. thesis, Université Bordeaux Montaigne 2018; Christiane Pinatel, "La formation de la collection de moulages d'après l'antique à Versailles", in: *Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France* 1996 (1999), 318-327, <https://doi.org/10.3406/bsnaf.1999.10115> (accessed August 6, 2022); Emmanuel Schwartz, *La Chapelle de l'École des beaux-arts de Paris. Présentation historique, artistique et littéraire*, Paris 2002.

collection building, while less attention has been paid to the production dynamics within the casting workshops and the marketing. One of the main references for the Atelier de Moulage is Florence Rionnet's 1996 monograph *L'Atelier de moulage du musée du Louvre*,⁶ in which she analyses the structure of the Atelier de Moulage to argue that increasing demand turned it into a commercial enterprise.⁷

[6] Rionnet has also noted that "the role of the moulders is more difficult to assess".⁸ However, documents from the French Archives Nationales and press articles enable the reconstruction of Arrondelle's biography and his performance at the Atelier de Moulage, which I will present in the first part of this paper. The second part will address the episode in which Arrondelle was finally dismissed from the Louvre, analysing the discourse generated by the authorities to accuse the *chef* of the state-funded institution. Together with a number of documents from international clients—with a particular focus on Argentinian collections—the archival material proves that the accusations did indeed reflect a regular occurrence in this workshop.

Eugène-Denis Arrondelle: sculpteur, mouleur, chef d'atelier

[7] Eugène-Denis Arrondelle was born in Paris on January 21, 1824. Little is known about his biography: Nicole Garcia tracked some details about his life and his stay in Chaville during his final years,⁹ while Rionnet describes him as a "figure who undoubtedly enjoyed a certain notoriety in artistic circles as a 'recognized' sculptor and especially as the inventor of the *staff*", a particular plaster moulding technique.¹⁰ A first-person account appeared in 1901, when the

⁶ Rionnet (1996); see also: Florence Rionnet, "L'atelier de moulages du musée du Louvre", in: *Moulages. Actes de rencontres internationales sur les moulages, 14–17 février 1997, Montpellier, France*, Montpellier 1999, 121-125. Continuing Rionnet's work, a study that addresses the Atelier de Moulage's production of Greek plaster casts is: Sophie Schvalberg, *Le Modèle grec dans l'art français (1815–1914)*, Rennes 2013.

⁷ Rionnet (1996), 47. The author points out that there were difficulties with deliveries due to a lack of budget for material expenses [*dépenses de matériel*] from 1870 onward.

⁸ Rionnet (1999), 123: "Le rôle des mouleurs est plus difficile à évaluer". On the trajectory and role of French *mouleurs*, see: Jean-Marc Hofman, "Rencontre avec un illustre inconnu: Jean Pouzadoux (1829–1893), mouleur en plâtre", in: *Bulletin de la société historique du VI^e arrondissement de Paris*, no. 24 (2011); Jean-Marc Hofman, "Camille Enlart s'en va-t-en guerre. Le musée de Sculpture comparée pendant la Première Guerre mondiale", in: *In situ. Revue des patrimoines*, no. 23 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.4000/insitu.10894> (accessed March 15, 2024); Peter Malone, "Les Gherardi, mouleurs à Paris et à Rome", in: *In situ. Revue des patrimoines*, no. 28 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4000/insitu.12699> (accessed March 15, 2024); Musée Français de la Carte à Jouer, ed., *Auguste Rodin et son mouleur Paul Cruet*, exh. cat., Issy-les-Moulineaux 2017; Clotilde Proust, *Les ateliers du musée des Antiquités nationales. Aux origines de la restauration en archéologie*, Ph.D. thesis, Université Paris 1, 2017, <https://theses.fr/2017PA01H015> (accessed March 15, 2024).

⁹ Nicole Garcia, "Un sculpteur-mouleur: Eugène Denis Arrondelle", in: *Bulletin de l'Association pour la recherche sur Chaville, son histoire et ses environs* 12 (2004), 10-14.

¹⁰ Rionnet (1996), 54: "Personnage qui jouissait sans doute d'une certaine notoriété dans les milieux artistiques comme sculpteur 'reconnu' et surtout comme inventeur du *staff*". Arrondelle is mentioned in: Rionnet (1996), 55, 60 (n. 52 and 54), 44 (n. 12).

journal *Le Petit Parisien* published an interview with Arrondelle—seventy-seven years old at the time—as part of a brief series called "Les doyens du travail" by a reporter named Pontarmé. These articles were dedicated to specialized workers who had "arrived at the extreme limits of age", in order to know "what they thought about the career they had followed and about the new needs which made the existence of workers less happy today".¹¹

[8] The interview featured a portrait that represents Arrondelle with the typical white apron worn by *mouleurs*, followed by a caption that defined him as a *sculpteur* (Fig. 2). It is worth noting that throughout the interview, Arrondelle's occupations appear almost as opposites; there is a tension between his sense of belonging to the artistic field of sculptors and his work as a moulder to earn a living—in short, a tension between artist and artisan. Even though the aim of the article was to feature craftsmen and workers, Arrondelle seized the opportunity to present himself as an artist, and he was even introduced as "a philosopher and a mind open to the speculations of art".¹² Nevertheless, his career as a moulder prevailed: "The casts soon took up all my time. How could I daydream about art fantasies in the presence of life's necessities? I had no choice in my career. It imposed itself."¹³



2 Eugène Arrondelle, *sculpteur*, in: Pontarmé, "Les doyens du travail", in: *Le Petit Parisien* (December 4, 1901), p. 1

¹¹ Pontarmé, "Les doyens du travail", in: *Le Petit Parisien* (November 19, 1899), 2: "[...] arrivés aux extrêmes limites de l'âge, [ils] nous ont dit ce qu'ils pensaient de la carrière qu'ils avaient parcourue et des besoins nouveaux qui rendaient moins heureuse l'existence des ouvriers d'à présent." In that article, a certain *tailleur de pierre* named Escolle was interviewed.

¹² Pontarmé, "Les doyens du travail", in: *Le Petit Parisien* (December 4, 1901), 1-2: "Mais c'est un philosophe et un esprit ouvert aux seules spéculations de l'art". This source is also quoted by Garcia (2004), 10-11.

¹³ Pontarmé (1901), 2: "Les moulages me prirent bientôt tout mon temps. Comment songer à des fantasmes d'art en présence des nécessités de la vie ? Je n'avais pas le choix de ma carrière. Elle s'imposait."

[9] His story emphasized a humble origin and harsh beginnings: he was the son of a bootmaker (*bottier*) who had lost everything to gambling by 1830 and left for England. His mother was from Saint-Dizier and sold vegetables at Les Halles in Paris to make ends meet. Despite that, he had managed to begin his artistic training at the École des Beaux-Arts, being a student of the painter Hippolyte Flandrin (Lyon, 1809 – Rome, 1864) and even boasted that some of his drawings had been corrected by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (Montauban, 1780 – Paris, 1867) in person.¹⁴

[10] According to Garcia and Rionnet, Arrondelle exhibited a number of busts and medallions at several *Salons*:¹⁵ *Portrait de M^{me} Arrondelle* (1885, n. 3299, bronze medallion), *Portrait* (1890, n. 3462, silver-plated bronze medallion),¹⁶ *Bacchante* (1892, n. 2227, marble bust),¹⁷ *M^{me} Satan* (1893, n. 2507, marble bust), and *Énigme* (1898, n. 3107, marble bust)—the last was praised as "very beautiful" in a brief critique.¹⁸ While his fame as a sculptor was rather insignificant in Paris, he enjoyed a higher renown in Saint-Dizier, his mother's birthplace. There, he exhibited a terracotta *Bacchante*,¹⁹ donated a version to the Musée de Saint-Dizier,²⁰ and was praised in the local press as "an emeritus artist, with proven talent, endowed with a delicate taste united with a perfect knowledge of ancient art and everything that relates to it"²¹.

[11] Regarding certain international collectors, Rionnet remarks that George Vanderbilt (1862–1914) acquired some sculptures authored by Arrondelle for the Biltmore Estate (Asheville, NC, United States).²² One of the few sculptures from Arrondelle's hand that can be found in online databases belongs to the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC (Fig. 3). According to the museum catalogue entry, the painted terracotta probably represents the

¹⁴ Pontarmé (1901), 2.

¹⁵ Garcia (2004), 11-12; Rionnet (1996), 60, n. 52.

¹⁶ *Salon de 1890. Catalogue illustré, peinture et sculpture*, Paris 1890, 44.

¹⁷ This bust was rejected at the 1889 *Salon*; see Garcia (2004), 14.

¹⁸ "Énigme, très beau buste en marbre de Arrondelle dont nous avons admiré précédemment une merveilleuse tête de *Bacchante*." H. Ayraud-Degeorge, "Le Salon de 1898, Société des artistes français", in: *L'Intransigeant* (May 1, 1898), 2.

¹⁹ Société des lettres, des sciences, des arts, de l'agriculture et de l'industrie de Saint-Dizier, ed., *Catalogue du Musée municipal fondé en 1881*, Saint-Dizier 1888, 42, no. 18.

²⁰ "Chronique des musées et bibliothèques", in: *Courrier de l'art*, vol. 10, no. 35 (August 29, 1890), 273. The donation was a terracotta, yet it is not clear whether this is the same sculpture he exhibited in the *Salon*, a second version, a copy or a replica, since Pontarmé's article mentions seeing another *Bacchante* at the Atelier de Moulage in 1901.

²¹ "Un artiste émérite, au talent éprouvé, doué d'un goût délicat uni à une connaissance parfaite de l'art ancien et de tout ce qui s'y rattache"; see Louis Houdard, "L'art ancien et les moulages au musée de Saint-Dizier", in: *Mémoires de la Société des lettres, des sciences, des arts, de l'agriculture et de l'industrie de Saint-Dizier*, Saint-Dizier 1894, 551-600: 555. The article continues that Arrondelle had invited some members from the *Société* to the Atelier de Moulage in Paris, but unfortunately, the *Société* had neither the space nor the resources to assemble a collection of plaster casts.

²² Rionnet (1996), 60, n. 52.

mythological goddess Erato, given that she is usually depicted with a lyre, an element here carved on the front of the figure's crown.²³ This bust offers a sample of Arrondelle's own style, aligning with the features of French *Salon* sculpture of the period.²⁴



3 Eugène-Denis Arrondelle, *Erato* (?), 1896, cast, painted and patined terracotta on marble base, 52 × 30 × 28,5 cm. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, gift of Laura Dreyfus Barney and Natalie Clifford Barney in memory of their mother, Alice Pike Barney, 1968.159.302 (photo: [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC](#))

[12] Apart from these few episodes as a sculptor, however, Arrondelle's professional development and success were mainly as a *mouleur*. Early on in his life, he entered the Atelier de Moulage as an apprentice under the direction of François-Henri Jacquet (1818–1848).²⁵ Arrondelle considered him "a good master", but he did not earn any salary during that time

²³ See Eugène Arrondelle, "Statue", Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, acc. no. 1968.159.302, <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/statue-30361> (accessed August 9, 2022).

²⁴ About the French *Salon* Sculpture, see Fae Brauer, *Rivals and Conspirators: The Paris Salons and the Modern Art Centre*, Newcastle 2013; Ruth Butler and Suzanne Glover Lindsay, eds., *European Sculpture of the Nineteenth Century*, New York/Oxford 2000; Dominique Lobstein, *Les Salons au XIX^e siècle. Paris, capitale des arts*, Paris 2006; Claire Jones, *Sculptors and Design Reform in France, 1848 to 1895*, Burlington 2014.

²⁵ According to the interview from 1901, he had entered the Atelier de Moulage 67 years prior (i.e. in 1834). Jacquet had an important career as a *mouleur* since he also headed the workshop of the École des Beaux-Arts from 1824 to 1848. See Élisabeth Lebon, "Répertoire", in: *Le fondeur et le sculpteur*, Paris 2012, <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.inha.3474> (accessed January 20, 2025).

and "life was hard".²⁶ Between the years under Antoine-Louis Barye's direction (1848–1850) and his own appointment as *chef d'atelier* in 1880, his position at the Atelier de Moulage is unclear.

[13] In this period, Arrondelle undertook a series of unspecified works of architectural plaster decoration, mainly in theatres.²⁷ These included, for example, the decoration of the dome of the Théâtre-Lyrique.²⁸ In 1849, he was involved in the decoration of the Galerie d'Apollon at the Louvre, which included the restoration of the ornamental figures on the ceiling.²⁹ In 1854, he embarked for England and worked as a foreman in the Fine Art Department of the Sydenham Crystal Palace, in the section of foreign collections, under the general superintendent Alexandre Desachy from Paris.³⁰ He later described his own job in the aforementioned interview as successfully managing 150 workers and "maintain[ing] the good reputation of French art among our neighbors".³¹ On his business stationery, which he used for a letter to the Argentinian painter Eduardo Schiaffino in 1906, for example, his Sydenham experience is marketed as follows: "one million works executed by one hundred French sculptors and moulders and supervised by myself" (Fig. 4).³²

²⁶ "La vie était dure". Pontarmé (1901), 2.

²⁷ See the references on Arrondelle's printed business stationery (Fig. 4), which he used for a letter to the Argentinian painter Eduardo Schiaffino, August 20, 1906, in: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Fondo Schiaffino.

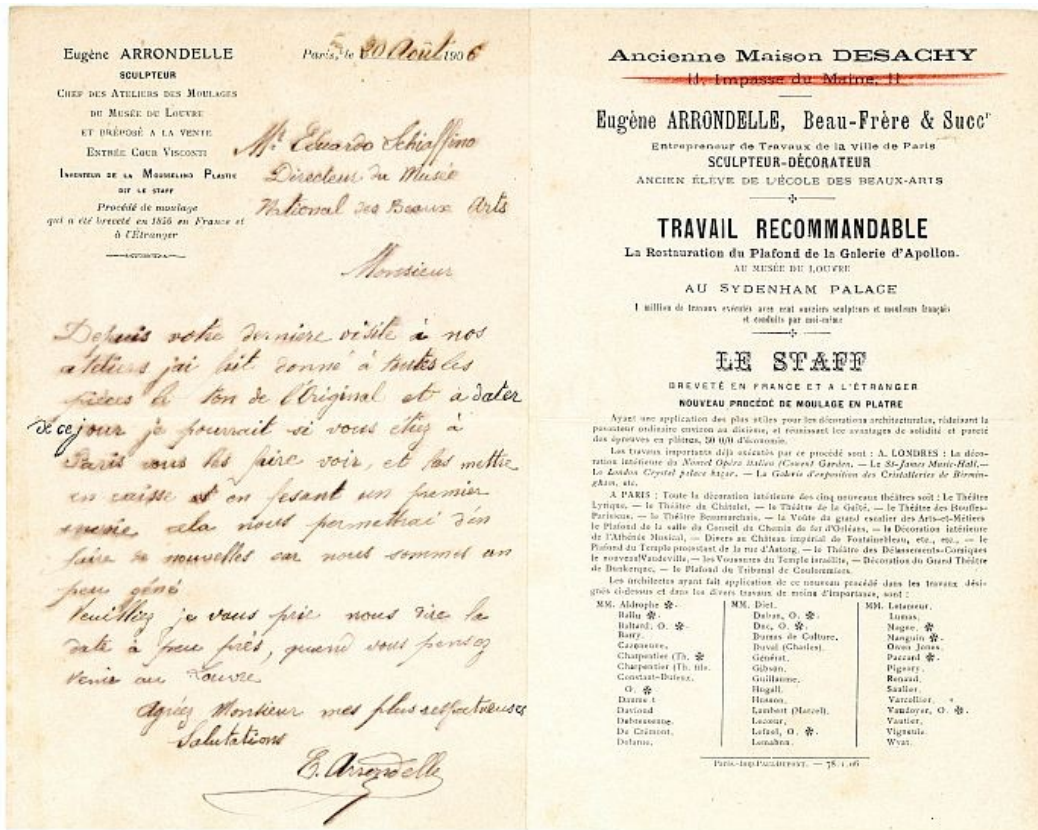
²⁸ "Nouvelles diverses, Paris et départements", in: *Le Ménestrel. Journal de musique* (September 6, 1874), 319. "M. Eugène Arrondelle, sculpteur décorateur, termine en ce moment, dit l'*Entracte*, une coupole de 30 mètres de circonférence et de 100 mètres de superficie [de la salle de l'ancien Théâtre-Lyrique]."

²⁹ Pontarmé (1901), 2.

³⁰ *The Fine Arts' Courts in the Crystal Palace*, 3 vols., London 1854, vol. 1: *North-West Side*, 71.

³¹ "Je puis dire que j'ai maintenu chez nos voisins la bonne réputation de l'art français." Pontarmé (1901), 2.

³² Letter from Eugène-Denis Arrondelle to Eduardo Schiaffino, August 20, 1906, in: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Fondo Schiaffino. "1 million de travaux exécutés avec cent ouvriers sculpteurs et mouleurs français et conduits par moi-même."



4 Eugène-Denis Arrondelle, letter on printed stationery to Eduardo Schiaffino, August 20, 1906. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Fondo Schiaffino (photo: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires)

[14] Finally, another significant achievement of Arrondelle's career as *mouleur*—or *sculpteur-décorateur*, as he decided to call himself on his stationery—was the invention of a casting procedure called *moulage du staff* or *mousselino-plastie*. The *staff* refers to a cast that was reinforced with pieces of canvas. In this process, the pieces of fabric were applied to the Plaster of Paris with a brush so that they could adapt to any shape of the mould.³³ The product was extremely light whilst retaining its strength, a feature that had a "most useful application for architectural decorations, reducing the usual weight to about one tenth and retaining the advantages of solidity and purity of plaster casts."³⁴

[15] Nevertheless, the invention of the *staff* has also been attributed to Desachy, Arrondelle's supervisor at the Sydenham Crystal Palace and *mouleur* of the École des Beaux-Arts. In this regard, Rionnet argues that the procedure could have been born around 1850 as a joint

³³ "Perfectionnements au moulage par M. Arrondelle (breveté le 17 avril 1857)", in: *Le Génie industriel* 15 (1858), 134-135.

³⁴ Advertising text on Arrondelle's printed business stationery, as used for a letter to Eduardo Schiaffino, August 20, 1906. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Fondo Schiaffino. "Ayant une application des plus utiles pour les décorations architecturales, réduisant la pesanteur ordinaire environ au dixième, et réunissant les avantages de solidité et pureté des épreuves en plâtres."

effort;³⁵ after all, they were in-laws—Arrondelle married Josephine Théodorine Desachy in May 1851³⁶—and he later referred to himself as the successor to the *Ancienne Maison Desachy*.³⁷ It seems that they developed the technique while working at the Crystal Palace: Desachy applied for a patent in England in 1856;³⁸ Arrondelle was able to do the same in France the following year.³⁹ However, as Christiane Pinatel argues, in the end, the former managed to secure a "monopoly" on the *staff* for the École, along with sales outlets in Paris, London, and Brussels.⁴⁰ In Arrondelle's interview in 1901, he claimed to have invented the *staff* with no mention of Desachy, while stating that "all my colleagues have benefited from it. Me, I stayed poor."⁴¹

Authorship and plaster casts at the Atelier de Moulage under Arrondelle's direction

[16] Arrondelle became *chef d'atelier* of the Atelier de Moulage du Musée du Louvre in 1880. He ran the workshop for almost three decades, until 1907, when he was dismissed for mishandling its administration and undermining higher levels of authority.

[17] The Atelier de Moulage was overseen by the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts,⁴² operating more specifically under the administrative control of a Secrétaire Agent Comptable des Musées and the artistic supervision of the Louvre's Conservateur des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines. Inside the workshop, the *chef d'atelier* ran the daily operations and oversaw an average of eleven *mouleurs*. Operating the Atelier de Moulage was no easy task. Previous *chefs* such as François-Henri Jacquet (between 1818–1848) and Pierre-Laurent Micheli (1850–1854) had been dismissed on the grounds that they had abused their power by exceeding the tasks assigned to them and by embezzling funds. An official regulation

³⁵ Rionnet (1996), 44, note 12.

³⁶ See Archives de Paris, Paris, État civil, Mariages, 1851, référence no. ECR75-1851-012563.

³⁷ As above, note 34.

³⁸ "Desachy introduced the technique of making fibrous plaster casts to London and in support of this took out a patent (no. 2494, dated 23 October 1856) for 'Improvements in producing architectural mouldings, ornaments and other works of art formed with surfaces of plaster or cement'; quoted from: "Alex. Desachy", in: *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland, 1851–1951*, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database, 2011, <http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk> (accessed August 3, 2022).

³⁹ "Perfectionnements au moulage par M. Arrondelle (breveté le 17 avril 1857)", in: *Le Génie industriel* 15 (1858), 134-135.

⁴⁰ Christiane Pinatel, "La 'restauration' en plâtre de deux colonnes du temple de Castor et Pollux dans la Petite Écurie royale de Versailles. Histoire et archéologie", in: *Revue archéologique* 35 (2003), no. 1, 67-114: 75, <https://doi.org/10.3917/arch.031.0067> (accessed August 6, 2022).

⁴¹ Pontarmé (1901), 2: "J'ai même inventé, sans en tirer avantage, un nouveau procédé de moulage: le staff; tous mes confrères en ont profité. Moi, je suis resté pauvre."

⁴² The name of the ministry varied slightly over time. The institutional hierarchy was (from top to bottom): Musées Nationaux (since 1895, the Réunion des Musées Nationaux) – Musée du Louvre – Département des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines – Atelier de Moulage.

of 1854 increased control over these technical supervisors and, according to Rionnet, the position therefore lost the "aura" it had once enjoyed.⁴³ Although its administrative structure implied multiple levels of control, there was, in fact, a lack of surveillance over what happened at the Atelier de Moulage. Some documents noted that the *chefs*' responsibilities were imprecise,⁴⁴ while one letter from the time explicitly stated: "for casts, control is far from being easy, we can even say it is impossible".⁴⁵

[18] The *affaire Arrondelle*, as Rionnet calls it,⁴⁶ was triggered in 1888 by an anonymous letter, signed by "un artiste", to the Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts. It alleged that an improper situation was taking place:

In special apartments, there are stamped figures ("Moulage Artistique E.A."), which are sold at higher prices than those listed in the Administration's catalogue. I also learned that these plaster casts came from outside, which was confirmed to me by the following: When I left the Museum, a carriage [...] was stationed in front of the Museum loaded with different figurines, these were brought in through the Pavillon Daru [part of Napoleon III's Louvre expansion] and from there exhibited to the public.⁴⁷

Thus, in the sales rooms of the Atelier de Moulage, casts from the "Musée du Louvre" were offered alongside other plasters from the mysterious "Moulage Artistique E.A.". The initials referred to none other than Eugène Arrondelle; this implies that he promoted and sold plaster casts from his own production or, as Rionnet defines it, "a personal collection", in the same space where he was formally employed.⁴⁸

[19] For our purposes, it is important to note that these accusations can be independently confirmed thanks to the existence of material evidence and a number of written sources. The first document in question is the 1901 interview in *Le Petit Parisien*. The Atelier de Moulage's premises were, in fact, the setting for this conversation, described by the interviewer as

⁴³ Rionnet (1996), 55, 332-333.

⁴⁴ Copy of letter from the Ministre des Finances to the Ministre de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts, April 29, 1903. Archives Nationales (hereinafter AN), Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Travaux d'Art, F/21/4463.

⁴⁵ Letter from the Directeur des Musées Nationaux et de l'École du Louvre to the Sous-Secrétaire d'État des Beaux-Arts, October 6, 1905. AN, Travaux d'art, F/21/4463: "Pour le Moulage, le contrôle est loin d'être aussi aisé, on peut dire plus, il est impossible."

⁴⁶ Rionnet (1996), 54.

⁴⁷ Letter from "Un artiste" to the Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, September 17, 1888. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466. "Il existe dans des appartements spéciaux des figures à l'estampille ('Moulage Artistique E.A.') qui sont vendues à des prix plus élevés que ceux figurant au catalogue de l'Administration. J'ai appris également que ces plâtres venaient du dehors, ce qui m'a été confirmé par ce qui suit : À ma sortie du Musée, une voiture [...] stationnait devant le Musée et était chargée de sujets différents, ces derniers ont été introduits par le Pavillon Daru et de là exposés au public."

⁴⁸ Rionnet (1996), 55.

"indeed one of the most fantastic places in Paris that the crowd does not know".⁴⁹ According to Pontarmé it was "inhabited by hunting Dianas, Antinouses, Herculeuses, Fauns and Victories of Samothrace".⁵⁰ From there, he was conducted to another "very cluttered" room "where busts of Coysevox, Caffiéri, and Houdon are displayed, mingled with graceful Tanagras and delicate Renaissance figurines".⁵¹ Up to that point, most of the objects mentioned were plaster casts of artworks in the Louvre, but then another figure—"enigmatic", "very modern", and "very well known"—caught Pontarmé's eye: a bust of the famous dancer *Cléo de Mérode* (b. 1875), a reduction of a work Arrondelle had exhibited at the *Salon* of 1898. And from that point onward, the description reveals a display of Arrondelle's sculptures:

*This is not the only work by the sculptor to be found in these stores. There is an Amphitrite, a Bacchante and a Saint Cecilia, which also bear his signature. He shows me, relegated to a corner, a figure of a female Faun with a sardonic laugh. "Another of my sins; a portrait. I have called her Madame Satan [...]." Further on, an unfinished Knight of Spring, perhaps intended for the next Salon, stands next to a delightful little Saint John that M. Arrondelle has sculpted after the Mino da Fiesole which is in the Louvre. A masterful portrait of the artist, a terracotta by Suchetet, accompanies these works.*⁵²

Perhaps this display of his own artistic works was a special setup on the occasion of the interview. Even so, it is still noteworthy that the venue was portrayed as Arrondelle's atelier rather than the plaster casting workshop of the Louvre.

[20] Moreover, when looking at records of Arrondelle's address, by 1896 the *sculpteur* and *chef du moulage au Musée du Louvre* was located at 2, rue du Louvre, meters away from the Atelier de Moulage.⁵³ Such close proximity would have allowed for easy transportation of objects—the anonymous accuser had witnessed the introduction of pieces from outside into

⁴⁹ Pontarmé (1901), 1: "Cet atelier des moulages du Louvre est bien un des endroits les plus fantastiques du Paris qu'ignore la foule."

⁵⁰ Pontarmé (1901), 1: "[...] tout peuplé de Dianes chasseresses, d'Antinoüs, d'Hercules, de Faunes et de Victoires de Samothrace."

⁵¹ Pontarmé (1901), 2: "[...] me conduit dans le magasin très encombré où sont rangés des bustes de Coysevox, de Caffiéri, de Houdon, mêlés à de gracieuses Tanagras et à de délicates figurines de la Renaissance."

⁵² Pontarmé (1901), 2: "Ce n'est pas du reste la seule des œuvres du sculpteur que l'on trouve en ces magasins. Voici une *Amphitrite*, une *Bacchante* et une *Sainte Cécile* qui portent également sa signature. Il me montre, reléguée dans un coin, une figure de Faunesse au rire sardonique. 'Encore un de mes péchés ; un portrait. Je l'ai appelé *Madame Satan*.' Plus loin, un *Chevalier Printemps*, inachevé, destiné peut-être au prochain Salon, voisine avec un ravissant petit *Saint Jean* que M. Arrondelle a sculpté d'après le *Mino da Fiesole* qui est au Louvre. Un magistral portrait de l'artiste, terre cuite de Suchetet, accompagne ces œuvres."

⁵³ *Annuaire-almanach du commerce, de l'industrie, de la magistrature et de l'administration*, Paris 1896, 2748. In 1881, he was registered as "Arrondelle (Eug.), *sculpteur-ornemaniste*, boul. Vaugirard, 121". *Annuaire-almanach du commerce, de l'industrie, de la magistrature et de l'administration*, Paris 1881, 123.

the Louvre—and provided ideal circumstances for finding clients. Whenever someone visited the Louvre to place an order for plaster casts, it would have been possible to push Arrondelle's products. Moreover, years after Arrondelle's death, the site continued functioning as sales premises for *objets d'art* and reductions after the antique under the name of H. Angeli, *Ancienne Maison Arrondelle* (Fig. 5).



5 Advertisement by *Ancienne Maison Arrondelle*, *H. Angeli succ[esseeur]*, in: *Annuaire de la curiosité et des beaux-arts. Paris, départements, étranger*, Paris: Librairies-Imprimeries réunies, 1920, p. 263

[21] In terms of material evidence, two objects related to Arrondelle have been identified in artistic collections. The first one is an *écorché* of a standing male figure, registered as a donation from Swedish painter Julius Kronberg (1850–1921) to the Nordiska Museet, Oslo (Fig. 6). The plaster, with unhidden joins that reveal the different parts of the mould, contains the legend of "Moulage Artistique E.A.", the same inscription to which the anonymous accusation referred in 1888.



6 Eugène-Denis Arrondelle (attr.), *Study model*, plaster, 50 × 13,5 cm, stamped "Moulage artistique EA". Nordiska Museet, Oslo, SKANM.0139529 (photo: Tomas Wiedersheim-Paul / Skansen)

[22] The second object belongs to the plaster cast collection of the Universidad de Costa Rica. It was acquired in 1897 for the newly created Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in San José, directed by Spanish artist Tomás Povedano de Arcos (Lucena, 1847 – San José, 1943). A female figure, identified as the muse *Polyhymnia*, has a metal plaque reading "Collection particulière / Arrondelle / 2, rue du Louvre / Paris" (Figs. 7 and 8).⁵⁴ The inscription explicitly states the authorship of Arrondelle and distinguishes him from the Atelier de Moulage by giving his personal address.

⁵⁴ Ericka Solano Brizuela, *Talleres de copias franceses en la colección de vaciados en yeso de la Universidad de Costa Rica*, thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica 2014: 102, <https://repositorio.sibdi.ucr.ac.cr/handle/123456789/2698>.



7 Eugène-Denis Arrondelle, *Polyhymnia*, before 1897, plaster, 77 × 20 × 36 cm. Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, Colección Histórica de Yesos, E 10 (photo: Natalia Cordero Villalobos)



8 Eugène-Denis Arrondelle, *Polyhymnia* (as Fig. 7), detail of the metal plaque inserted into the base: "Collection particulière / Arrondelle / 2, rue du Louvre / Paris". Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, Colección Histórica de Yesos, E 10 (reprod. from: Brizuela [2014], 101)

However, unlike the sculptures named by Pontarmé that were original designs by Arrondelle as an artist, and unlike the *écorché* that is a general type, the *Polyhymnia* is a reduced copy of a Roman marble statue in the Louvre collection.⁵⁵ Moreover, the Atelier de Moulage sold both

⁵⁵ *Polyhymnia*, Roman copy after a Greek original, marble, 188 × 95 × 51 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, Ma 472. See Solano Brizuela (2014), 119.

full-size and reduced casts of the sculpture,⁵⁶ which leads to the conclusion that, in this case, although the client was aware of purchasing an Arrondelle, the latter's product was competing against the Louvre's profits.

[23] There is a further indication that clients were conscious of the subtle yet crucial difference in authorship between a cast from the Louvre and another from Arrondelle. Argentine painter Ernesto de la Cárcova (Buenos Aires, 1866–1927) was commissioned to purchase a collection of plaster casts for the Universidad de Buenos Aires in 1906. According to some informal accounting records, he listed a purchase from the Louvre amounting to 1,288.75 francs. However, the list also itemized a purchase directly from Arrondelle "*por calcos*" for 186.40 francs.⁵⁷ In this case, even though it is not exactly clear which casts were purchased under the respective expenditure line, both authorships are recorded—hence they were neither confused nor obscured.

[24] Let us now return to the question of how the Atelier de Moulage's higher administration dealt with the anonymous 1888 accusation. The Louvre classified the matter as confidential⁵⁸ and did not conduct an investigation, but acknowledged and approved Arrondelle's practices. A rather unusual response from the *conservateur* of the Musée de la Marine attributed the letter to a pouting *homme de service* and argued that the "Moulage artistique E.A." casts had never been sold to the public nor exhibited under the pretense of being from the Louvre, since they belonged to Arrondelle's collection. He then explained that there was an agreement which authorized Arrondelle to market some of his figures and reductions, as long as they were not mixed with the plaster casts from the Atelier de Moulage. He concluded: "any confusion would be, moreover, impossible because of the size of the Arrondelle plasters and the special stamp".⁵⁹ Following this expert's interpretation, the *écorché* would have been one of the "models from this [i.e., Arrondelle's] collection [that] are often demanded by drawing schools",⁶⁰ because it had the metal plaque that clearly set it apart from the Atelier de Moulage's products. The coexistence between the Louvre and the Arrondelle plaster casts

⁵⁶ Musée du Louvre, *Catalogue des moulages en vente au palais du Louvre. Antiquité (édition provisoire)*, Paris 1900, 11, no. "118. *Polymnie*, Louvre, 1,86, 0,90, 200 fr." and "118 bis. *Polymnie* (réduction à la moitié), 0,97, 0,50, 80 fr." See Solano Brizuela (2014), 119.

⁵⁷ Ernesto de La Cárcova, "Rendición de cuentas a la Facultad de Ciencias Exactas, Físicas y Matemáticas", 1906. Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Colección Ernesto de La Cárcova, Fondo documental, Caja 3. See Milena Gallipoli, "En el horizonte de la copia. Calcos escultóricos y educación artística", in: *Ernesto de La Cárcova*, ed. Laura Malosetti Costa, Buenos Aires 2016, 63-67.

⁵⁸ Letter from "Un artiste" to the Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, September 17, 1888. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466.

⁵⁹ Letter from the Conservateur du Musée de la Marine to the Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, Direction des Musées Nationaux, October 2, 1888. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466. "Toute confusion serait, du reste, impossible à cause de la dimension des plâtres Arrondelle et de l'estampille spéciale."

⁶⁰ Letter from the Conservateur du Musée de la Marine to the Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, Direction des Musées Nationaux, October 2, 1888. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466: "[...] les modèles de cette collection sont souvent demandés par les Écoles de dessin."

continued for almost two more decades, despite new allegations that clients were also misled. For instance, a note from 1894 reported that the *chef d'atelier* was producing Tanagra figurines on his behalf and that "several people came to tell me that they had bought ambiguous models with the firm conviction that it was the museum that sold them".⁶¹

[25] Arrondelle's tenure coincided with an increasing demand for plaster casts, whether for Universal Exhibitions, national institutions such as universities,⁶² or the creation of new artistic collections in international cities. The customer lists compiled by Rionnet provide an insight into the demand for plasters from the Atelier de Moulage. It is interesting to note that, for the period under Arrondelle, sales to institutions were only recorded in the years 1880, 1883, 1884, 1902, and 1907.⁶³ The following reason might explain the lack of control over Arrondelle over such a long period: a disconnect between the daily practice of the Atelier de Moulage, which dealt with private clients, and the higher administration, which handled institutional and official requests.⁶⁴ This is well illustrated by a minute concerning a request for a plaster cast of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The order met with hesitation because

*the staff of our Atelier de Moulage is barely sufficient to carry out the orders placed by private individuals, schools, and French and foreign museums. These orders are sometimes put off for a long time because our workers are often busy making casts that you allocate to public institutions.*⁶⁵

As the ministry requested plaster casts as gifts or loans to public institutions (or for events such as world's fairs), Arrondelle withheld information about private orders. Under these circumstances, Arrondelle had, as Rionnet states, "metamorphosed into a veritable 'organizer' of the supply, manufacturing and distribution [...] profiting from the 'illicit' trade in reductions

⁶¹ Note attached to a minute of the Secrétaire du Ministère de l'Instruction Publique des Beaux-Arts et des Cultes, May 1894. AN, Archives des Musées Nationaux, Personnel et administration générale (Série O), 20150497/20. "Plusieurs personnes sont venues m'affirmer avoir acheté des modèles barbouillés avec la ferme conviction que c'était le musée qui les faisait vendre."

⁶² See Morinière (2018).

⁶³ Rionnet (1996), 353.

⁶⁴ See Milena Gallipoli, *La victoria de las copias. Dinámicas de circulación y exhibición de calcos escultóricos en la consolidación de un canon estético occidental entre el Louvre y América (1863–1945)*, Ph.D. thesis, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Buenos Aires 2021: 119-125, <https://ri.unsam.edu.ar/handle/123456789/1654>.

⁶⁵ Minute from the Directeur des Musées Nationaux to the Ministre des Beaux-Arts, February 4, 1893. AN, Archives des Musées Nationaux, Atelier de Moulage du Louvre (série Y), 20150043-10. "Le personnel de nos ateliers de moulage est à peine suffisant pour exécuter les commandes faites par des particuliers, par des Écoles et des Musées français et étrangers. Ces commandes se font quelquefois longtemps attendre parce que nos ouvriers sont souvent occupés à l'exécution de moulages que vous attribuez à des établissements publics."

and patinated plaster casts".⁶⁶ In 1907, the Louvre finally decided to act against Arrondelle and remove him from his position.

[26] This process coincided with the archaeologist and philologist Théophile Homolle (Paris, 1848–1925) leading the Musées Nationaux (1904–1911).⁶⁷ According to a report, he intended to reform the Atelier de Moulage's organization and administrative procedures to improve its functioning and and earn it the prestige it deserved:

*The Atelier de Moulage is far from obtaining and deserving the praise accorded [illegible] to that of the chalcography. The collection of moulds—which is entirely rich in pieces from our own museum, many from other galleries and monuments from France and abroad, which includes some very important pieces whose originals have sometimes disappeared, and which has been further enhanced by the considerable funds donated by the Société des Arts Décoratifs—is, for the most part, piled up in basements; has never been classified, arranged or even inventoried in its entirety; there is no complete catalogue; and no one knows the number, nor the extent, nor even less the subject of all the moulds we possess.*⁶⁸

[27] Homolle considered the organization of the production of plaster casts at the Musée de Sculpture Comparée du Trocadéro as a model to follow because it relegated the work to a third party:

*At the Trocadéro, Mr. Enlart works to his satisfaction with independent contractors. I asked him to send me the specifications of the Trocadéro's contractor, Mr. Pouzadoux, who is a highly skilled moulder and with whom he is very satisfied.*⁶⁹

Yet he also recognized the difficulty of applying such radical reforms to the Louvre given the type of workers it employed and its abundant and varied cast production.

⁶⁶ Rionnet (1996), 55. "Au fil des ans, Arrondelle s'était métamorphosé en véritable 'ordonnateur' de l'approvisionnement, de la fabrication et de la diffusion, il avait laissé le défaut s'immiscer dans la production et profitait du commerce 'illicite' des réductions et des plâtres patinés."

⁶⁷ About the Réunion des Musées Nationaux and its institutional history, see: Agnès Callu, *La Réunion des Musées nationaux (1870–1940). Genèse et fonctionnement*, Paris 1994.

⁶⁸ *Extrait d'un rapport de Monsieur Homolle*, no date. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466. "L'atelier de moulages est loin d'obtenir et de mériter les éloges accordés [illegible] à celui de la chalcographie. La collection des bons creux, qui est entièrement riche en morceaux de notre musée, de beaucoup d'autres galeries et de monuments de France ou de l'étranger, qui compte des pièces très importantes dont les originaux, parfois, ont disparu, qui s'est encore [accrue] du fonds considérable donné par la Société des arts décoratifs, est, pour une grande partie, entassée dans des sous-sols, elle n'a jamais été ni classée, ni rangée, ni même inventoriée en entier, il n'y en a pas de catalogue complet, et nul ne sait ni le nombre, ni la quantité, ni encore moins le sujet de tous les moules que nous possédons."

⁶⁹ Letter from the Directeur des Musées Nationaux et de l'École du Louvre [Théophile Homolle] to the Sous-Secrétaire des Beaux-Arts, March 19, 1907. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466. "Au Trocadéro, M. Enlart applique à sa satisfaction le régime de l'entreprise. Je l'ai prié de me communiquer le cahier des charges de l'entrepreneur du Trocadéro, M. Pouzadoux, qui est un fort habile mouleur et dont il est très content."

[28] Regarding Arrondelle, no concessions were made to the old *chef d'atelier*, who by then was eighty-three years old and would die that same year. The apologetic attitude that had once overlooked his business practices turned into outright condemnation: "Because, in short, the poor functioning of the workshop is simply the consequence of the favourable situation accorded to M. Arrondelle." However, the same letter also acknowledged that it was the complete lack of control and surveillance that had enabled him to profit from the Atelier. It concluded that a reform and reorganization of the institution were the best directions to follow.⁷⁰

[29] The accusations against Arrondelle during the years of Homolle's management were made in a series of reports drawn up by higher levels of the administration responsible for the Atelier de Moulage. In addition to the charge of selling his own casts, Arrondelle was held accountable for delays in deliveries; broken and misclassified moulds in the workshop;⁷¹ free usage of materials and labour hours of his employees for his personal benefit; the addition of unauthorized patinas to casts of Louvre artworks; and the direct, personal management of sales records and correspondence with customers.⁷²

[30] In light of these new accusations, it is worth taking a look at another Argentinian case to assess Arrondelle's management. As mentioned above, the director of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires, painter Eduardo Schiaffino (1858–1935), bought a collection of plaster casts from the Atelier de Moulage in 1905–1906.⁷³ On this occasion, although no casts from Arrondelle were registered, several of his alleged misconducts can be detected. Arrondelle personally carried out all negotiations and communications with Schiaffino. This could explain why there is no official invoice from the Atelier de Moulage in Argentinian archives and why no documents from this exchange can be found in the French Archives Nationales. Accordingly, Rionnet's annexes do not mention any Argentinian client of the Louvre. Arrondelle arranged visits to the Atelier de Moulage through personal correspondence; his letterhead indicated that he was both *chef des ateliers* and *préposé à la vente* (Fig. 9).⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Draft of unsigned letter, 1907. AN, Travaux d'art, F/21/4466. "Car, en somme, le mauvais fonctionnement de l'atelier n'est que la conséquence de la situation de faveur faite à M. Arrondelle."

⁷¹ Letter from the Sous-Secrétaire d'État des Beaux-Arts to the Directeur des Musées Nationaux, 1907. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466.

⁷² Draft of handwritten note, no date. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466.

⁷³ See Milena Gallipoli, "La campaña de los yesos: Compras de calcos escultóricos de Eduardo Schiaffino para el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Buenos Aires (1903–1906)", in: *H-ART. Revista de historia, teoría y crítica de arte* 13 (2023), 15-35, <https://doi.org/10.25025/hart13.2023.02> (accessed March 1, 2024).

⁷⁴ Letter from Eugène-Denis Arrondelle to Eduardo Schiaffino, August 20, 1906. Buenos Aires, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Fondo Schiaffino.



9 Letterhead from the personal stationery of Eugène-Denis Arrondelle, 1906; detail of Fig. 4.

[31] The most questionable aspect of this encounter was that several casts were offered with special patinas—along with corresponding surcharges. Schiaffino received a typed list of casts and a note in Arrondelle's handwriting stating:

The repair and the patina like the original will increase the plaster by 30% over the full price of the catalogue; that being so

Order of Antiques 6.586, patina 30% 1.975

Order of Moderns 7.582, patina 30% 2.275

[Total] 4.249.⁷⁵

In the end, Schiaffino selected several plaster casts with patina and proudly displayed them at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. These included, for example, a copy of the *Delphi Charioteer*, which featured a patina that imitated the bronze original (Fig. 10).⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Eugène-Denis Arrondelle (attributed to), [handwritten note to typewritten list] "Musée National des Beaux-Arts, Monsieur Eduardo Schiaffino, Directeur", no date. Buenos Aires, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Fondo Schiaffino. "Le réparation et la patine comme les originaux auguementent les platre de 30 % sur le prix fort du catalogue soit un total de / Commande des Antiques 6.586, patine 30 % 1.975 / Commande des modernes 7.582, patine 30 % 2.275 / [Total] 4.249." Spelling mistakes are transcriptions from the source.

⁷⁶ See Milena Gallipoli, "Delfos entre París y Buenos Aires: Circulación y exhibición de calcos escultóricos en yeso del Auriga Vencedor", in: *Revista de História da Arte e da Cultura* 2 (2021), no. 2, 37-57, <http://hdl.handle.net/11336/170897> (accessed March 15, 2024).



10 Exhibition room in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires (detail), single photograph, labeled on the back as "Sala del museo en su primera época", ca. 1907. Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires, C 2059, inv. 044227 (photo: Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires)

[32] Regardless of Schiaffino's awareness or ignorance regarding the Atelier de Moulage's internal affairs, it can be argued that some of the plaster casts that he bought for Buenos Aires were manufactured under 'illicit' circumstances. A cast such as the *Delphi Charioteer* was something between an official copy and a fake: The Atelier de Moulage was the author of the object that came out of the mould and it was offered in its official sales catalogue. Arrondelle, however, added the patina according to his own choice and judgement.—As will be explained below, patinas were not officially allowed to be added to the Louvre casts at this time. —The final piece was given the metal plaque of the Louvre. Some authors have considered the patina to be the most authentic and original feature of a plaster cast.⁷⁷ Yet in this case, the patina resulted from an unauthorized and potentially fraudulent practice. Arrondelle chose not to put his trade mark, presumably to discreetly profit from a small percentage of the selling price. However, it is not possible to determine whether he kept only the profit from the patination or from the entire sale.

⁷⁷ For instance, in the 1930s, Erwin Panofsky argued that plaster casts could only achieve an artistic appearance through manual patination. In the debate about plaster casts in a recent issue of *Perspective*, Malcolm Baker also noted that, "Whilst the plaster cast seems to exclude any creative dimension, the treatment of its surface plays a decisive role in the perception that we have of it". Erwin Panofsky, "Original and Facsimile Reproduction" [first published in German, 1930], transl. by Timothy Grundy, in: *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* nos. 57-58 (2010), 330-338, and Baker et al. (2019), 29. For the application of patinas on plaster in France, see also: Catherine Chevillot, "La question des revêtements de surface des plâtres du XIX^e siècle", in: *Le Plâtre. L'art et la matière*, ed. Georges-Louis Barthe, Paris 2001, 173-185.

[33] While other French workshops, such as that of the Musée de Sculpture Comparée, favoured the use of patinas in this period,⁷⁸ they were not applied to the Louvre casts: "Under the terms of the regulations, the Atelier de Moulage must deliver the plaster casts it manufactures as they are extracted from the moulds, i.e. white and with all their joints [*coutures*]", wrote the Directeur des Musées Nationaux et de l'École du Louvre in September 1907.⁷⁹ Hence, whenever Arrondelle added a patina, he was selling an exclusive product for a demand that the Atelier de Moulage was not allowed to meet. Only by the end of 1907—after Arrondelle's exit—, the administration finally authorized the application of patinas for an extra charge, and it was acknowledged that such pieces had an attractive market and were potentially profitable.⁸⁰ In this regard, Arrondelle's dismissal can be interpreted as an opportunity for the Atelier de Moulage to rethink its role as a sales agent and update its products in order to keep up with a changing demand and clientele. The adjustments went beyond the addition of patinas and included an enlarged offer of reductions and fragments of sculptures.

[34] Additionally, a plan was set out to reorganize the Atelier de Moulage under the supervision of a new *directeur technique*, Eugène Legrain (1837–1915).⁸¹ When evaluating the Atelier, Legrain expressed extremely harsh criticism of its state of affairs: "For many years I have heard [...] that the casts from the Louvre Museum are mediocre and often even less so. I must admit myself that this severity is only deserved."⁸² He was charged with the following tasks: (1) reorganising and classifying the moulds through an inventory; (2) revising the state of the plaster casts, repairing used moulds, and manufacturing new *épreuves*; (3) setting up an exhibition of models in a salesroom open to the public; and (4) executing casts with patinas

⁷⁸ See Julie Beauzac, "L'histoire matérielle des moulages du musée de Sculpture comparée (1897–1927)", in: *In situ. Revue des patrimoines* 28 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4000/insitu.12670> (accessed March 15, 2024).

⁷⁹ Letter from the Directeur des Musées Nationaux et de l'École du Louvre to [illegible], September 11, 1907. AN, Travaux d'art, Musées et Expositions, vol. 4 (xix^e-xx^e siècles), F/21/4466. "Aux termes des règlements, l'Atelier de Moulage du Musée du Louvre doit livrer les moulages qu'il confectionne tels qu'on les extrait des moules, c'est-à-dire blancs et avec toutes leurs coutures."

⁸⁰ A. Briand (signed), copy of *arrêté*, October 7, 1907. AN, Atelier de Moulage du Louvre (série Y), 20150043/13.

⁸¹ Legrain was described as: "M. Legrain, statuaire, hors concours, chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, qui joint au talent une expérience de cinquante années acquise, depuis l'âge de douze ans, comme mouleur, comme praticien et comme statuaire, dans les ateliers des meilleurs maîtres ou dans le sien propre et dans les grands chantiers qu'il a dirigés, aux Tuileries sous Lefuel, à Amboise sous Ruprich Robert, à l'hôtel de ville sous Ballu et à la Sorbonne sous M. Nénot." Letter from the Directeur des Musées Nationaux et de l'École du Louvre to the Sous-Secrétaire des Beaux-Arts, March 19, 1907. AN, Travaux d'art, F/21/4466.

⁸² Report from M. Legrain, Directeur technique de l'Atelier de Moulage du Musée du Louvre to the Directeur des Musées Nationaux et de l'École du Louvre, September 26, 1907. AN, Archives des Musées Nationaux, Atelier de Moulage du Louvre (série Y), 20150043/1. "Depuis bien des années j'entends dire [...] que les moulages provenant du musée du Louvre sont médiocres et souvent moins encore. Je dois reconnaître moi-même que cette sévérité n'est que méritée."

and reductions.⁸³ However, Legrain stepped down after one year, despite an increase in sales.⁸⁴ The *mouleur* Vicenti replaced him as *chef d'atelier* between 1908 and 1911, followed by Émile Laffont; both had already been employees of the Atelier de Moulage.

Conclusions

[35] This paper focused on the production and sale of plaster casts at the Atelier de Moulage under the direction of Arrondelle. The aim was to analyse and distinguish the official products and practices from those that were not authorised. For decades, the Louvre and the higher administration exercised little control over what went on at the Atelier de Moulage. As a result, its *chef d'atelier* enjoyed a level of autonomy that allowed him to deal directly with clients and also to sell his own sculptures or services. By using official documents from the Atelier de Moulage in combination with external sources, I was able to reconstruct how Arrondelle acted at the Atelier de Moulage. Sales to Buenos Aires served me as a case study of Arrondelle's protracted and deceitful administration, in which he acted as a skilful dealer who knew how to place his products and gain a personal advantage at the expense of the Louvre. The use of Argentine sources as historical evidence also revealed that the institutional archives of the Atelier de Moulage must be complemented with other documents, as the documentation in the former is not complete and does not provide a full panorama of the Louvre's clients in the period under study. Indeed, as demonstrated above, this gap has arisen precisely because Arrondelle personally oversaw much of the bookkeeping.

[36] It can be said that Arrondelle unofficially competed with the Atelier de Moulage. I identified the coexistence of three different types of plaster casts: the 'authentic', official casts from the Atelier de Moulage; official casts with unauthorized patinas; and casts of the artist Arrondelle's own sculptures. Across all three categories, one feature remained constant: all the casts were marked with metal plaques indicating either the Louvre or Arrondelle's private studio as the manufacturer.

[37] Despite accusations of clients being deceived, they were generally aware of the difference between a plaster cast from the Atelier de Moulage and another from Arrondelle. Firstly, the metal plaque on the sculptures themselves provided unambiguity; secondly, this becomes evident from the clients' distinction in their own records. However, some products crossed the line into deception, such as a patina on a cast that was supposed to be white, or the offer of a cast with Arrondelle's tag when it was also for sale by the Atelier de Moulage. From the point of view of the administration of the Atelier de Moulage, there was a shift from condoning to condemning Arrondelle's practices over the course of two decades.

[38] The case study of Arrondelle's production of plaster casts can reveal how different features and historical circumstances can determine whether certain casts were official or

⁸³ Letter from the Directeur des Musées Nationaux et de l'École du Louvre to the Sous-Secrétaire des Beaux-Arts, March 19, 1907. AN, Travaux d'art, F/21/4466.

⁸⁴ See "Vente de moulages, années 1907 et 1908". AN, Archives des Musées Nationaux, Atelier de Moulage du Louvre (série Y), 20150043/1.

unauthorized copies. From a philosophical point of view, Nelson Goodman has defined a forgery as "an object falsely purporting to have the history of production requisite for the (or an) original of the work".⁸⁵ Under such a definition, it could be argued that Arrondelle falsely implied that some of his products had the same "history of production" as those of the Louvre. Some plasters from Arrondelle were sold under fraudulent circumstances insofar as he took advantage of the Louvre's market conditions. Deceit was placed upon the consumer, while affecting the Louvre's market position as producer. Within this market for multiples, authorship was not being altered in the final product; rather, manipulation occurred in terms of who could exploit, and profit from, the right of reproduction.

⁸⁵ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, New York 1968, 122. On forgery in the period under study, see: Aviva Briefel, *The Deceivers: Art Forgery and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, Ithaca 2006; Daniel Becker et al., *Faking, Forging, Counterfeiting: Discredited Practices at the Margins of Mimesis*, Bielefeld 2018. About the link between plaster casts as copies and forgeries, see Milena Gallipoli, "David entre yesos y falsos. Definiendo calcos escultóricos como copias", in: *Armiliar. Revista de Historiografía de Arte* 5 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.24215/25457888e031> (accessed September 7, 2024).

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